

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

15 CFR Part 922

Initiation of Review of Management Plan/Regulations of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary; Intent to Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan; Scoping Meetings

AGENCY: National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Initiation of Review of Management Plan/Regulations; Intent to Prepare Environmental Impact Statement; Scoping Meetings.

SUMMARY: The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS or Sanctuary) was designated in July 1991, and consists of three separate areas in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico, known as East Flower Garden, West Flower Garden and Stetson Banks. The present management plan for the Sanctuary was completed in 1991. In accordance with Section 304(e) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, as amended, (NMSA) (16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.), the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) of the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is initiating a review of the management plan, to evaluate substantive progress toward implementing the goals for the Sanctuary, and to make revisions to the plan and regulations as necessary to fulfill the purposes and policies of the NMSA.

The proposed revised management plan will likely involve changes to existing policies and regulations of the Sanctuary, to address contemporary issues and challenges, and to better protect and manage the Sanctuary's resources and qualities. The review process is composed of four major stages: information collection and characterization; preparation and release of a draft management plan/environmental impact statement, and any proposed amendments to the regulations; public review and comment; preparation and release of a final management plan/environmental impact statement, and any final amendments to the regulations. NOAA anticipates completion of the revised management plan and concomitant documents will require approximately eighteen to twenty-four months.

NOAA will conduct public scoping meetings to gather information and other comments from individuals, organizations, and government agencies on the scope, types and significance of issues related to the Sanctuary's management plan and regulations. The scoping meetings are scheduled for October 17, 19, and 24, 2006, as detailed below.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before November 10, 2006.

Scoping meetings will be held at:

- (1) October 17, 7:00-10:00p.m., Webster, TX
- (2) October 19, 7:00-10:00p.m., Corpus Christi, TX
- (3) October 24, 7:00-10:00p.m., New Orleans, LA

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be sent to the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (Management Plan Review), 4700 Avenue U, Building M/A, Galveston, Texas, 77551. Comments will be available for public review at the same address.

Scoping meetings will be held at:

- (1) Webster Civic Center
311 Pennsylvania Street
Webster, TX 77598
- (2) Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
- (3) Audubon Zoo – Dominion Learning Center
6500 Magazine Street
New Orleans, LA 70118

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Morgan, 409-621-5151 Ext. 103, fgbmanagementplan@noaa.gov.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. Section 1431 et seq.

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
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